

Subject: MASATO TANAKA! beats the hell out ATSUSHI ONITA! MASAATO MOCHIZUKI! and ARAYA! have a really good match. WILLO THE WISP! and VENOM! rule it in OMEGA. SHIGA! becomes the butt of even MORE jokes!:) and other stuff from this week!

ALOHA~!

WELCOME TO DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #69! (Tee-hee!)

Well, the Lucha is in and GOD! There is a metric ton of it, so this will be the last clearinghouse before the TOTAL LUCHA FREAKOUT! I also got mountains upon mountains of tape from Rob FUCKIN Newland and I'll definatley give you a lowdown on ALL the New Japan from late 94 to early 96 as soon as I get through the Tapes From The Immortal Glenn and the Lucha Libre PHAT ASS BONANZA- so the proverbial dance card is staying pretty full. I wrote a batch and Rev Ray wrote a batch.... But FIRST! A word from Phil Schneider...

\$%\$%\$%\$ FMW v. ECW v. ZEN COMMERCIAL TAPE

-phil!

Sandman v. Buh Buh Ray Dudley v. Terry Funk:

Terry Funk is about 5 years past the point where he could make something like this watchable. Buh Buh and Sandman stink real bad. Terry Funk beats Buh Buh with the worse DDT in the 5000 years of recorded human history. Not even good for this kind of bad match, Funk is running on muscle memory.

Mr. Gannoseke/ W*ING Kanemura v. Hayabusa/ Jinsei Shinzaki:

I dug this alot, W*ING and Gannoseke were great heels, kind of like a Japanese Heavenly Bodies, doing a lot of neat double teams and being huge pricks. They make fun of Shinzaki's lame move set and powerbomb his holy crappiness through a table early so Hayabusa can carry the bulk of this sucker. Plus W*ING has a really bad canary yellow singlet with Super Independent across the front and "We are Freedom" across the back. And we all know that a really horrible outfit is as great as a really cool one. The bulk of this match has team Zen really work over Hayabusa's taped ribs and keep pulling him, while Shinzaki lays around. Shinzaki get tagged in and is the most deliberate house of fire ever. The end has a ton of cool near falls, including an asskicking released dragon suplex by Hayabusa. The end is really neat as Hayabusa hits the 450 splash but hurts his ribs, he then tries a springbord which W*ING turns into a stomachbreaker and gets the pin. Real, real great, Hayabusa is five times the wrestler he was before he went to All Japan, and W*ING and Gannoseke just rock, also Shinzaki had the sense to stay out the ring and let the wrestlers wrestle so I can't even hate him.

Atashi Onita v. Masato Tanaka:

Onita is the heel here which is as weird as watching Hogan as a heel. The role works for him as I thought the old babyface bump machine was getting old. Tanaka sells a lot as he is all spunky in the Akiyama/Otani role of the up and coming star trying to beat the legend. Onita works all stiff with him which is kind of neat. Tanaka really wrestles a great match in this. It was the first

actual wrestling match I've seen Onita in, and I dug a shitload more than most of his deathmatches. The end was really neat with Tanaka hitting all of his big moves to where it looked like Onita was finally going down, but Onita turns Tanaka's rolling elbow into a small package, which is a pretty good way to make Tanaka look strong but still put over Onita, which you have to do because he is a legend and -god forbid- he actually do a freaking job ever.

Buh Buh Ray Dudley/ D-Von Dudley v. Jedo/ Gedo:

For those of you who love really shitty wrestling and really shitty wrestlers this is sort of a dream match. The poopest of the U.S.A and the crappiest of Japan come together to lay a huge turd right in Korekan Hall. This is what some call a comedy match except it really wasn't funny and wasn't really a match. I miss Little Snot Dudley so much it hurts at night.

Sandman v. Sabu:

You've seen it, you know what it is like, and here it is. Sabu had a broken jaw but still wrestled. There is a thin line between bravery and stupidity. Wrestling an intensely mediocre match against a sloppy alcoholic in front of a bunch of Yakuza hangers-on and other degenerate FMW fans with a fucking broken jaw is well on the stupid side of that thin line. ECW, ECW, ECW!!!

Jinsei Shinzaki/ Hayabusa/ Masato Tanaka v. Atashoi Onita/ Mr. Gannoseke/ W*ING Kanemura - War Games match:

Okay, try to follow me here- you have a War Games cage match, with a ladder in the middle of the cage with a barbwire baseball bat at the top of ladder. Wrestling in this match you have two of the top ten blade freaks in the history of wrestling: Kanemura- who let Kevin Sullivan carve his arm up to the tune of 60 stitches- and Onita- who holds the Guinness book of world records entry for stitches ever; plus Tanaka, Gannoseke Hayabusa and Shinzaki- none of whom have ever been shy about dragging a razor blade across their forehead and letting the plasma spray, and let me point out again that they are in a cage, and there IS NO BLOOD. In FMW, the midgets blade. In FMW, the women bleed in every match. This is the only Kanemura match EVER where he doesn't bleed, and he picks a War Games match to do it in. Is this match on TBS? Is it in Maryland? WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON???? Besides the unnerving lack of blood, this was a pretty good match. Kanemura and Gannoseke are superbastards, and they beat the shit out of Hayabusa, et al- giving Busa four straight released german suplexes, killing Hayabusa in a different way than he usually kills himself. They handcuff Shitsucky to the cage for a good portion of this match which is a good way to keep him from embarssing himself, plus he did that little somersault kick which is kind of neat. Tanaka was all suplex intensive and great, and Hayabusa gets his first win on Onita by giving him a beautiful moonsault off the top of the cage. Then Gannoseke and Kanemura turn on Onita and beat his ass, and Hayabusa gets on the mike and sobs like a beauty pagent contestent. Actually really neat in a Twilight Zone kind of way.

!@!@!@!@ GAEA G-Panic! Special 2/7/98 (taped 1/15/98 from Korakuen Hall)
-dean!

Uematsu vs Chigusa:

Your basic youngster trying to prove himself against the wily old vet crap. Uematsu tries to make it compelling and Chigusa sells quite a bit before getting the pin. I don't see the point.

Nagashima vs Chigusa:

Same as above but Chigusa sells less. Hirota comes in to talk shit to Nagashima to keep the youngster portion of the GAEA vs OZ Academy Ass-Stomp Bonanza buildup going.

Carol Midori/ "LLPW woman w/ cane and bad eye makeup"- Glenn ! vs Yamada/ KAORU:

Who is this LLPW mystery woman. I've seen a bunch of her matches and she's all over the place these days. Glenn doesn't know, I don't know- even though Loreface hipped me to her name once, Great Hisa's page on LLPW freezes up my Atari Computer so that's no help, but you know who I mean.:) Yamada and KAORU continue to tag though they are hated enemies lately, as Chigusa tries to see if their loyalty to GAEA will unite them against the LLPW invaders. And the resounding answer is a big "That Bitch can go straight to hell, if she thinks I'm tagging in to help her." The GAEA catfight continues as Carol and the Zubas Queen beat the hell Yamada and then KAORU dropkicks Yamada "accidentally" while making the save and thus Yamada stalks off as the Carol and true TrailerTrash Beyond The Actual Charm of The Trailerparky EMI~! start beating the hell out of KAORU with lead pipes and stuff. Carol Midori can actually wrestle really well and her and KAORU rip it up pretty good before Anglemania sets in. Lurlene of LLPW gets kicked a lot by Yamada and you got to love that. After being deserted by Yamada, KAORU is victim to some swanky double team top rope powerbombs and what have you- as they kill young and beautiful KAORU dead. Chigusa looks on and all isn't happy in GAEALAND.

Devil Masami/ Hirota vs Yamada/ KAORU:

The saga continues. Yamada and KAORU get along about as well as Jimmy Johnson and Jerry Jones after four bottle of Brass Monkey as they take on the lumbering Devil Masami and the currently pushed a whole bunch and Butt-butt intensive Hirota. This match, KAORU and Yamada don't sabotage the match for the other one or anything, but they never actually tag each other in. If one gets close enough to the corner, the other will tag her back or shoulder and get in; if one of them wants to tag out, they tag the turn buckle. Masami and Hirota get the upperhand for a lot of this because they are being an actual tagteam- albeit not a GOOD tagteam, but a tagteam nonetheless. Yamada finally gets Hirota alone and kills the living crap out of her. Postmatch, Devil offers words of encouragement to the young Hirota for putting up a good fight and all and then chastises Yamada and KAORU for being such a couple of big babies. Chigusa then freaks out and starts slapping her charges around, saying "You DIPCRAPS! First you make us lose to the trailer park zubas-wearing broad from LLPW, and now you're making me look like chump in front of Devil Masami?!? She's OLDER than EVEN I AM!!! Kandori and Aja have gotta be loving this..." KAORU and Yamada look all sad and stuff and say that they will try to get along at least until the tag tourney where they look to face OZ and Hokuto or Sugar and Nagashima or some other combo that will start this whole process up again. WOO-HOO!

Las Cachorus Orientals vs Meiko Satomura/ Sonoko Kato:

Mita and Shimoda start this off by NOT wearing the little pants (well, there goes ONE star) and by beating up the spunky and wild Meiko Satomura and young Sonoko. Sonoko is bleeding early from a table spot that looked pretty hideous- the Man-destroying Mima Shimoda with the Phat Ass piledriver on the table. Mita and Meiko fight all around the building and- after a while- it settles down into an actual proper tag match. Meiko is all awesome and shit by taking on Mita and actually getting a Death Valley Bomb on the young and beautiful Mita- the IRONY! The basic story is that Sonoko never truly recovers from the pile-driver on the table, so they try to get her to tag in by beating the hell out of Satomura and after Satomura finally tags out, they start beating the hell out of Sonoko with chairs and suplexes and stuff. Satomura keeps making the save as Sonoko finally gets enough energy to tag out and Meiko goes all shootstyle of their asses and gets Mita in a couple of cross-armbreakers that should get the submission- BUT- each time Shimoda fights off Kato and pastes Meiko with a chair. Meiko hits a Death Valley Bomb that should get the pinfall, but Shimoda tackles the ref- in the truly great hot minky heel style that has launched a thousand cold showers. Shimoda and Mita finally get Sonoko back in the ring after using every heel thing they can think of to keep Satomura from getting the pin and finally powerbombs Sonoko to death. Postmatch, Meiko gets all up in Mita's shit and tells her to go [can't translate] herself and then punches her in the face. This was fun.

Mayumi Ozaki/ Sugar Sato vs Meiko Satomura/ Sonoko Kato:

This kicked ass. This whole match is basically setting up Sugar vs Meiko Satomura, in that OZ pretty much is there to simply kill Sonoko with assorted and sundry urecans, leaving Meiko and Sugar there to go punkin a punkin. GAEA got REAL Good Again REAL Quick. GET ALL THIS.

%^^%^%%^^%^ NEW JAPAN TV : Final Powerhall 1/10/98 taped on 1/4 from Tokyo Dome
-REV RAY!

Kendo KaShin v. Koji Kanemoto:

We're joining the match in progress and KaShin is in control, working over Koji with a lot of forearm smashes. Kanemoto flips over a suplex attempt and goes for a german suplex but Ka Shin lowblows him. Kendo plays Wreck Koji's Knee for a bit, Koji gets control with an overhead belly to belly off the ropes, drops a few ax kicks on Kendo's head and gets in his supercool top rope powerslam. Kendo starts going after Koji's arms with a few flying arm scissors takedowns, including one off the top rope. Koji gets in a german suplex and a tiger suplex, Kendo kicks out. Koji gets caught with a kick attempt into a dragon screw then a cross armbreaker for the submission. Post match, Kendo taunts Koji and makes the belt motion. Pretty solid but after working the leg and the dragon screw, you'd think they'd finish with a leg hold.

Yuji Nagata v. Hiroyoshi Tenzan :

[jip] Yuji in control with some kicks to Tenzan's face. Tenzan in control with a lariat out of the corner, hits a leg lariat and a powerbomb. Yuji regains control with kicks, hits an exploder. Tenzan blocks a second, but Yuji overhead belly to belly's him. Yuji kicks out his leg, puts him in the "Nagatalock" and gets the surprise submission. I'm sort of surprised they'd put Yuji over

Tenzan, but I guess New Japan doesn't really pay attention to the pushes their boys get in WCW... see Nakanishi winning the tag titles.

Satoshi Kojima/Manabu Nakanishi v. Tatsumi Fujinami/ Osamu Nishimura:

[jip] Kojima is in control on the old codger, hitting a lairat, corner jumping forearm and a top rope elbow drop. Fujinami dragon screws Kojima, puts him in the dragon sleeper. Nakanishi comes in, gets dragon screwed. Nishimura tags in, kicks Kojima a few times, corner drop kicks him, misses a drop kick and Kojima drops him with a lariat. The former IWGP champs sandwich clothesline him, Kojima hits a super Stone Cold Diamond Crusher. Nishimura ducks a lariat, hits a german. Holds out Kojima for a Fujinami knee drop, hits a top rope drop kick from the top for a two. A few near pins and get the win with a Northern Lights Suplex. Nishimura's super push continues to build for his title shot.

Overall, mostly clips, nothing to really write home about.

@#@##@#@##@# NEW JAPAN TV-2/14/98 (taped 2/7 from Sapporo)
-dean!

Jushin Thunder Liger vs Shinjiro Otani:

Five fucking minutes for a fucking IWGP title change? Is Sullivan booking New Japan TV now? This is positively WCWish in it's shitheaded contempt for juniors. I guess they had to show Rick Bogner being put over by Hirata in the nWo clusterfuck no matter what the cost. Anyway, the amount of the match that aired was pretty okay. I'm with Idol on the stupidity of selling a Cross-Armbreaker for five minutes like it's a stinking sleeper hold but -regardless- Liger follows the New Japan Fucks Over UWFi age-old tradition by selling a fully extended cross-armbreaker like it's a hammerlock. YUCK. The ending is all neato as Ohtani is in full Kobashi wannabe mode- crying and hyper-ventilating like all real champs do... OH WAIT! Liger hits some big finishers off the toprope, with Ohtani escaping the first Northern Lights Bomb by doing that "crawl through the ropes to live" sell that I love, reversing the second one and succumbing after the third. Ohtani hits his un-dangerous but fun-loving springboard dropkicks to try to set up his Dragon Suplex finisher. But he doesn't and Liger tears him a new one and I'm happy I guess. Now give it to Kanemoto already.

Nishimura vs Sasaki:

I was stoked about writing about this match. I figured the ones who hated this were All Japan Fanboy cry-babies or Highspot Bed-wetters and I was gonna lift the shroud of the New Japan psychology and show them that they weren't looking for the right things. It started and I was thrilled, "Nishimura is using the same psychology as that really cool Sasaki/ Mutoh match from last month, but he's working the right arm- the Lariat arm! This simple psychology stuff in New Japan is great! I..." then I fell asleep. Then, I tried to watch it again and I had the same feeling of hope and then they took it outside and did all these chairshots and brawling and stuff, and I thought, "COOL! They're expanding on the straightforward style of the Mutoh match and adding some other elements!" Then they took it to the ring again and I lost total track of what was going

on (I read my daughter a book. She's FINALLY tired of GO DOG GO, so whenever she wants something else read to her we jump immediately. We had this same situation when she finally got tired of the baffling CHICHA-CHICKA-BOOM-BOOM. So you can see our dilemma) so FINALLY, I watched all of it yesterday between giant mega-doses of Lucha Libre (Astro Rey RULES!) and I figured out what went wrong with this match- Kensuki Sasaki does NOTHING until the finisher. This plan of action works in the Mutoh match because it was clipped and Mutoh's offense and grasp of psychology used was MOUNTAINS more interesting than Nishimura's. I like Osamu Nishimura but he can't carry Kensuke Sasaki to a good match if the champ refuses to do anything but sell his right arm the whole match. By the time Nishimura is aping the Mutoh dropkicks on Sasaki's knee by top rope dropkicking him on the arm, I was outta there. Bottom line: Nishimura isn't Mutoh. Sasaki isn't gonna carry anybody. We're all in for a long hard ride.

&*~&*~&*~&* ALL JAPAN TV-1/11/98 (taped on 1/2 from Korakuen Hall) -Asaro Cup : part of the younger wrestlers teamed with veterans tournament :

-rev ray!

Jun Iizumda/Tamon Honda v. "Mr. Excitement" Akira Taue/ Stickboy Shiga :

The former sumos Jun and Akira do a sumo match up at the start with Taue getting the better. Shiga tags in and starts getting beat on. For those of you who have never seen Shiga, he's the "Before" picture in the old Charles Atlas ads and the pro argument for the use of steroids in wrestling. Taue has enough Shiga abuse, comes in and starts beating on Honda, drags the Stickboy to his corner and tags in. He's in control for a bit, but then Jun and Tamon strat double teaming him. Jun nodowa's Taue after a Tamon headbutt. Taue hits a high kick, tags to Shiga who hits a top rope drop kick and a springboard splash. Jun pushes him in a corner, Shiga hits a swinging DDT. Jun gets in cotnrol. Taue makes the save, drops Shiga onto Jun after a front suplex. After some double teaming, Taue nodowa's Jun, then picks up Shiga as if for an atomic drop, throws him forward, Shiga splashes Jun and gets the pin.

Albright/Williams/Ricky Santana v. Mossman/Misawa/Akiyama :

Santana and Skull Von Crush... the talent imports just get better and better. This is really my first look at Mossman. Stupid Reverend Observation : how to tell if Doctor Death is in the match (but not in the ring). Listen for the loud "Come On (insert guy's name here)!" I dunno... this match was just sort of.... there...it went on for about 10 minutes with no real building. After Doc clotheslined Akiyama on the floor, he shook the railing- I think to wake up the audience. Things seem to wake up late in the match with Misawa finally waking up Doc a little bit and they work a bit of a fluid series, this continues a little with Albright and pretty much dies down after Mossman is tagged in. I dunno, just not very spectatular. Santana gets in two corner charges (one clotheline, one spinning kick) a swinging DDT, takes too long to do a splash, Mossman hits him with a version of the TKO, Akiyama tags in and puts this match to a mercify end with an exploder.

Overall : Seen better. Seen worse.

\$\$\$%\$%\$%\$%\$% MICHINOKU PRO 1/29/98 (TV taped 1/16/98)

-PHIL!

TAKA Michinoku v. Shoichi Funaki:

TAKA kicks ass in the way that only that the Japanese TAKA can. He does a Steamboatian job of selling a knee injury, incorporating the busted knee into every move he made in the match. The knee gets hurt when TAKA goes for a springboard and Funaki hits him when he is on the ropes and he drops down and just smashes his knee against the ring apron, it is a super wicked bumps that actually works in the storyline of the match. The bad knee works to Funaki's strengths, which is real elaborate counters into kneebars, my favorite being the counter out of the Michinoku Driver attempt. This may have been TAKA's most coherent singles match, and it is a damn shame that he will be countering the dastardly plots of that darn Jerry Lawler and that clever Jim Cornette (NWA wrestling upholding the traditions, where wrestlers wrestle, and big mouthed fat guys hit them with tennis rackets), instead of wrestling great matches like this. Vince McMahon and his cretinous fuckface bookers can blow me sideways.

Dick Togo/ Men's Teiho v. Great Sasuke/ Super Delfin:

A clinic in cool, KDX are role models for all the kids. Dick and Men's spend most of this match finding ways to make sure the Sasuke's upcoming knee surgery is super complicated. They do a whole piss load of super nasty leg breaking things, including a top rope Flair kneebreaker, Bret Hart figure four around the ringpost and- most cringe-inducing- a togosault senton on Sasuke knee as his leg was draped across the bottom rope. The boys get the submission with a figure four leg jerk thing which is super nasty looking and painful. In between all of that, Sasuke proves he is is totally insane by doing a unprotected tope-con-hilo and killing himself dead, and Super Delfin does some head scissors and has a cool mask. Watching this match and the TAKA match back to back, really illustrated why TAKA is the better wrestler now. Both were selling knee injuries but TAKA integrated it with the flow of a competitive match, while Sasuke allowed it to overtake the competitive flow. Also TAKA selling was consistent, while Sasukes was intermittent. Dick Togo, Dick Togo and more Dick Togo.

Super Delfin/ Gran Naniwa/ Yone Genjin v. Great Sasuke/ Tiger Mask/ Masato Yakashiji:

This match was alot like the early days of Michinoku Pro. Lots of Lucha comedy spots, which are funny the first time you see them but get consistently less funny the more they are used, and fast stuff but no real good suplexes or dickishness which makes the KDX tinged matches so great. Pretty good, not great and I demand great from MPRO. Yone Genjin shouldn't really be wrestling on TV.

Yone Genjin v. Jinsei Shinzaki:

When you hit the fast forward button it looks like Shinzaki is moving at regular speed. Genjin started throwing snowballs at Shinzaki, and I was reminded of the old maxim, "If there is no bad there is no good." Thank you Jinsei Shinzaki for providing that necessary balance.

Dick Togo/ Shoichi Funaki/ Super Boy v. Great Sasuke/ Tiger Mask IV/ Gran Hamada:
Super Boy and Togo- the heroes for fat boys everywhere- team up with the underrated and subtly cool Funaki to take apart Sasuke's knee again. Super Boy, who is about as fat as Friar Furgeson, does a second rope moonsault, stereo Eddie springboard sentons (with fellow partner in portly goodness Dick Togo) and a super rib breaking superfly splash. Sasuke does a crazy Asai moonsault and Tiger Mask kind of stays out of the way. Gran Hamada slaps the taste out father times mouth by kicking the most ass on the techinco side, including super fast Lucha exchanges with all of KDX. They beat Sasuke after the same Togotastic rolling senton that he used to kill Sasuke in the tag match. It is a super cool move, but they probably should have saved it for the end of the match spot, and not exposed it before. Small quibble for an asskicking match.

!@!@!@!@ ORGANIZATION FOR MODERN EXTREME GRAPPLING ARTS- (8/ 2/ 1997, Southern Pines, NC) Summer Spectacular Commercial tape.
- dhr!

I watched this over at Hangman Tim's who got it from the OMEGA table at an indie match in Washington, North Carolina- (which had an AWESOME match with Mike Youngblood and Timbre the Lumberjack [I'M SERIOUS!] if the two minutes that I saw of the handheld Tim made does it any justice.) OMEGA is about as close to Michinoku Pro as we get here in the US- the same elements are there- smaller, better workers, Freaked Out masks, homegrown charm, tiny venues, INSANE highspots- I'm starting to dig this company the most. This is their first commercial tape and I'm sure the amazing Allan Barrie has it on his WHOO! Site. This is their Title tourney where they had the OMEGA title tourney and a battle royale for the New Frontier title. This is pretty CHOICE in places.

Wolverine vs Cyclone:

Wolverine is Will O' the Wisp without a mask but you didn't read that here.:) Cyclone is about a 150 lbs and 14 years old:) and looks really green but hits a nice lucha head-scissors- the counter-balance kind that El Hijo del Santo does. After that, Wolverine pretty much is on the offense since he has to wrestle three more times on the night.

Surge vs The Black Skull-

Surge is the number one face and is the best wrestler in the promotion. He's high-flying, mat-based and psychologically sound. I told Tim that I thought Black Skull is Kid America from NWA2000 and he didn't think so, so I'm convinced now.:) Skull was pretty hit and miss in a green kind of way, but takes a fat ass bump and hit some nice stuff. Surge polishes him off with the Megawatt- a pretty beautiful toprope quebrada.

Sweet Dreams vs Kid Dynamo:

Sweet Dreams is quite the rudo of the promotion as he is the basic wrestler that makes the young highflyers look good, while also doing the whole Gangsters thing- except he looks like he was more into Cameo and Earth, Wind and Fire than Coolio and he also looks like he can

actually wrestle a little bit. Kid Dynamo is my fave out of this promotion and the emphasis is on "Kid" because I think he is 17 on this tape. He is gonna be such the bomb when he turns 20. HELL! He's already the third best worker in this whole axis of good North Carolina workers- behind Surge and Venum. Dynamo hits the SWANK hurricanrana on the floor and Sweet Dreams bumps like a virtual Tobacco Road Tony Arce.

Cham Pain vs Foma:

Cham Pain is the old guy in the promotion because he might be late twenties, early thirties. He's also the most insane- doing all the table intensive, or high-altitude spots. He's also the greatest heel in indie America because he is about as truly fantabulous on the mic as anyone out there today. He's got the whole 4 bottles of Country Quencher and a Camero with the Molly Hatchet cranked up redneck thing going, and it rules. Plus he's a pretty good wrestler, if a bit inconsistent between SWANK highspots. Foma is a tall lanky North Carolina youngster who does a martial arts thing. He's also pretty highflying as it seems they grow junior heavyweights in North Carolina like Canada grows Curling champs. Foma seems really green and Cham Pain gets him through the match setting up his spots pretty well before polishing him off.

Will o' the Wisp vs Venom:

This was kinda of a filler match to get both of these in the Battle Royal so they could wrestle for the other belt they were deciding that night, so this wasn't much; plus Venom- a really good big man who is one of the better indie workers I've seen- breaks the ring missing a somersault senton. It all leads to an awkward time limit draw. But their match as the last two contestants in the most spotfilled Battle Royal since that Lucha Battle Royal on WCWSN is the best match on this tape. It's basically Will O' going lucha hogwild, hitting every highflying finisher imaginable until Venom gets to the offensive transition and hits every Japanese power finisher imaginable. This is great stuff and this was one of the better indie matches I've seen on tape or live. Venom could be the bomb- he's definately got the skills and the size. Will O' gets lost between moves a little but he is also a great prospect along with Surge, Kid Dynamo, and I personally would snap up Cham Pain if I was a big two talent scout trying to build a heated light heavyweight division. OMEGA RULES.

Cham Pain vs Surge:

Good match but a little sloppy. Does sport the most insane table spot I've seen in a while with Cham Pain trying real hard to break his own neck by missing a second rope rolling senton onto a table- giving himself about two inches to adjust his landing or risk landing directly on his neck. Surge then kills him even deader with a top rope quebrada and does his best Ricky Steamboat face interview.

Sweet Dreams vs Surge for the OMEGA Wrestling Heavyweight title:

This was really good until the goofball ending which I won't spoil for you. Surge gets all Mid-Atlantic melodramatic as he is quite the perfect face for this day and age. The y take it outside the ring and Sweet Dreams takes some man-sized bumps on the floor- some REAL insane and back-altering, As they get back in the ring, Surge kills Sweet Dreams DEAD. But they have that ending, which I'll let you find out for yourself.:)

OMEGA could be the real future of US indies. These guys are working the right style and have a zillion decent workers or potentially good workers. They need more masks.... and the announcer needs to shave that "beard" :) GET ALL THIS!

@#@#@#@# WRESTLE ASSOCIATION "R"- (Samurai TV 3/2/97 (taped 2/8 Tokyo)
- dhr!

WAR is a wacky mistress. She says she's leaving, you get used to the fact, she says she's coming back- but Araya's running the show. Unlike WCW- the worst case scenario in wrestling in about every category 99% of the time- where the ABSOLUTE LEAST is done with some of the most talented wrestlers ever, WAR is the total polar opposite. Guys who should be driving trucks in Japan are known to have good matches in WAR for whatever reason. The key is that WAR has a couple of guys who can work but they are so UN-charismatic that you overlook it. Being a total freak, I find this aspect all-encompassingly alluring. Fuck a Hashimoto good ring presence. Fuck a Kanemoto kinky attitude. Fuck trying to be any semblance of Kawada cool. It's Japanese Heavyweight Geekdom Assembled and they all found a home in WAR. Anyway, Lorefice sent me this tape and- after stealing the matchlist and seeing what was on it, I figured Mike was kidding me and was trying to prove to me that WAR CAN have a card as horrible as it sounds. Once again, WAR delivers in fucking spades, because this tape REFUSES to totally suck.

Ryo Miyake vs Tomohiro Ishii:

Well, THIS sucked. Ishii is one of those Tarzan Goto Shin-FMW guys and he isn't good. No. Not at all. Miyake looks like he has a future- but only if WAR keeps going with Araya and stuff. Well. He does have a nice German Suplex. Ishii will have a career as long as folks show up to see Tarzan Goto and his entourage of fatboys. HELL. People pay good money to see Sandman. Unmercifully unclipped.

Battle Ranger vs Onryo:

This was the first match to deliver on this august tape when I had all but written it off. Onryo is that guy who had the almost watchable spotfest as the lovable Japanese Zombie (or maybe it's a Ghost Gimick. Either way it looks like the ghosts in Kurasawa's "THRONE OF BLOOD".) in the IWA restart tape from last year. He's up against one of the true anomalies of Puroresu- Battle Ranger. Battle Ranger is too small to even be a credible Junior Heavyweight in Japan, he's not spectacular enough to go to Mexico successfully- though his size would dictate such a move, his mask isn't cool enough, etc, etc. He's a decent worker though and he just can't find a place to wrestle unless of course he goes to the Land of Misfit Wrestlers- Wrestle Association "R". This match is insane, fun, and all goofy- a mid-grade highspot fest with a couple of truly GREAT CRAZY spots thrown in which lifted this to the surprising level it reaches with smatterings of psychology thrown in when it doesn't get in the way of these two killing themselves. Actually, Battle Ranger's Asai RIDER KICK could get him into CMLL, I'm thinking. Onryo hits a SWANK Run-Ropes-Twisting-Senton to the floor which Battle Ranger counters with

a really beautiful full Asai Moonsault. The ending is truly funtabulous as Battle Ranger gets Onryo in the Ludicrously elaborate neck-breaker where you hold the opponent over your head and you drop down to your knees, breaking the opponents neck across your shoulder (Rey, Ultimo and Juventud have all whipped this baby out in WCW ((and Bischoff can blow me sideways about that Juventud/Norton shit.))) and Battle Ranger then goes straight into the preposterous Lucha Roll-up. Onryo may be someone to look out for if he's as green as I suspect he is because does possess that desire to kill himself so we can watch. I hope Battle Ranger finds a home if the New WAR doesn't pick him back up. This was good.

Kamikaze vs Jun Kikuchi:

I got the new Glenn Tape today and I was watching the first thing on it and THIS Kamekaze got the try-out for the All-Japan Dome Show? I thought, for some reason, it was one of the other fourteen or fifteen Kamikazes that permeate Social Progress Wrestling Federation, Wrestle Dream Factory and Fuyuki-Gun, but I guess this one would make sense. He's the biggest and is a very half-way decent wrestler. His hair is REALLY bad- a sort of Dynamite Kansai circa 1993 look. Both of these guys can wrestle well enough, as they are always in these anonymous heavyweight feuds that any sensible man would fast forward through but I don't. Kamikaze has a decent power move set, hit's some nice flying things for a big man, and he and Kikuchi make this a pretty decent basic match. It gets suplex-intensive for a minute there and I was digging it. The worst Swinging DDT leads up to nice Fisherman Buster Suplex for the win. For WAR freaks only.

Michiko Nagashima/Sayori Okino vs Michiko Oumaki/Miho Wadabe:

I remember a time not too long ago when it was impossible to get any LLPW or see any of their wrestlers anywhere unless you had a benevolent friend who had extensive cable in Tokyo. Now these gals are everywhere- my guess is that they will be at the SummerSlams next or something. The basic story- which permeates a lot of LLPW that I've seen is that one side (Oumaki and Wadabe) wrestles it straight while the evil side (the DIVINE Okino/ Nagashima) uses weapons to get out of any rough situation. This was right in the middle of all Women's matches, lifted a bit higher because Okino is so strikingly oddly beautiful.

Osamu Tachihikari vs Masakazu Fukuda:

Tachihikari is the lumpiest of all the WAR heavyweights and he isn't real good, though I like him because he is such an UNLIKELY looking wrestler. Tenryu must have said, "You're tall. You'll do." Masakatsu Fukuda is dressed like a member of the Italian Olympic Cycling team from the movie "Breaking Away", so I figured he wasn't winning. Their attempt at getting all shootstyle is good for a chuckle or two. Lumperific!

Nobutaka Araya vs Masaaki Mochizuki:

This fucking ruled, as Mochizuki shows once again that he is one of the most underrated wrestlers in Japan. Araya is Tenryu's protege and Mochizuki is Koji Kitao's protege and this match is better than what those fossils could produce. Mochizuki counters Araya's Tenryu Pro Style stiffness with kicks that would kill any WCW heavyweight. There is one beautiful moment where Mochizuki is fighting out of Araya's lariat flurry and pastes Araya five times to the face in

a sequence that HAD to all kinds of hurty and stuff. They have a really good nearfall marathon at the end, with Araya hitting mid-grade powermoves until Mochizuki can get some sort of mutant shootstyle/lucha hybrid spots in: my two faves- WARsault second rope spinning head kick while Araya is on the apron, and the fantabulous knee-bar into La Majistral. Araya is good and is gonna be a good heavyweight for a while. Mochizuki is freakin AWESOME. This rocked with Wrestle and Romance Goodness!

Shinichi Nakano/Arashi vs Lance Storm/Yuji Yasuraoka

Nakano is all shootstyle and stuff, but he doesn't have the truly whip ass hair-stylings of Tatsuo Nakano, so there is even less to dig. Arashi isn't as horrible as I once thought he was, but he's no walk in the park. Yasuraoka is absolutely KING-SIZED and Lance Storm has an ECW flashback to working like a pansy in this one but he is still sufficiently highflying and cold-bloodedly technical enough for me to dig. Basic story is that the Juniors try to get around the power of Nakano and Arashi. Arashi isn't afraid to wrestle the bulk of the match and sell for the youngsters without blowing up or fucking anything up too immensely. The fact that he has the offense of Tachihikari doesn't help though. Yasuraoka makes this match close to compelling but not enough to make it a really good match- in that he does tricky feats to get and stay on the offense as the opponents look kinda clueless. It definately achieves the WAR standard of being better than it looked on paper- but didn't get to that Wildly Better Than It Looked On Paper level.

Tenryu/Tatsuo Nakano/Tatsumi Kitahara vs Koji Kitao/Nobukazu Hirai/Hiroshi Hatanaka:

Tenryu, the Amazingly Great Tatsumi Kitahara and Elvis Nakano beat the holy shit out of the world's biggest shootstyle hack and all-around fossilized load- Koji Kitoa, so I liked this a whole bunch. I forget who wins. Hatanaka wasn't in enough for me to get a fair assessment. The make-up-enhanced Hirai is like a smaller lumpier version of Tachihikari- like a sixteen year old Tachihikari at a KISS concert. "PLAY [ROCK BOTTOM] DUDE! ROCKET RIDE!!"

NEXT WEEK: LUCHA LUCHA LUCHA AND EVEN MORE LUCHA!

Dean Rasmussen, Juventudiac~!

Stop your train- Let a poor boy ride. Oh can't you hear me crying.

-Smoke Stack Lightning, Lightning Hopkins